

# The Star-Ledger/EAGLETON POLL

FOR RELEASE: SUNDAY, APRIL 9, 1989  
RELEASE: SL/EP 23-4 (EP 73-4)

CONTACT: NANCY WHELCHER  
JANICE BALLOU OR  
BOB CARTER

## RELEASE INFORMATION

A story based on the survey findings presented in this release and background memo will appear in Sunday's *Star-Ledger*. Other newspapers may also use this information in their Sunday editions. Electronic media may release after 5:00 p.m. Saturday, April 8. We ask users to properly attribute this copyrighted information to the "*Star-Ledger/Eagleton Poll*."

## **NEW JERSEYANS AGREE: ABORTION IS A WOMAN'S PRIVATE DECISION, A MAJORITY FAVOR THE 1973 SUPREME COURT DECISION**

A large majority of New Jerseyans --80 percent-- believe that the decision to have an abortion is a private matter that should be left up to the woman to decide without government intervention.

According to the latest *Star-Ledger/Eagleton Poll*, almost 7-in-10 state residents also support the 1973 U.S. Supreme Court's decision legalizing abortion, while 1-in-4 oppose the ruling. Six-in-ten oppose a constitutional amendment that would ban abortions except when the mother's life was in danger.

The survey, conducted by phone with 800 New Jersey adults between March 6 and 15, shows that over 80 percent of New Jerseyans are concerned about the outcome of the upcoming U.S. Supreme Court case that may alter the Roe vs. Wade decision. If the Court's action leaves the legality of abortion up to individual states to decide, New Jerseyans would oppose new state laws restricting a woman's right to abortion by a wide 3 to 1 margin.

The U.S. Supreme Court will rule this term on a Missouri case challenging Roe vs. Wade and there is speculation that the Court could substantially alter or overturn its

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### ATTENTION RADIO STATIONS:

Audio is available after 5:00 p.m. on Saturday, April 8, from (201) 932-3605 (Rutgers Feature Phone).

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1973 decision legalizing abortion. About half of the state's residents have heard "a lot" or "some" about the Court's review, while an equal number have heard "a little" or "nothing at all."

Most New Jerseyans express some concern about the outcome of the Supreme Court's upcoming decision on abortion, with 4-in-10 saying they are "very concerned" and an equal number saying they are "somewhat concerned." Those who believe the Supreme Court should not reverse its 1973 abortion ruling are most likely to be "very concerned" about the outcome of the case. In addition, New Jerseyans who are close to someone who has had an abortion are much more likely than others to say they are "very concerned" about the upcoming ruling.

Almost half of New Jerseyans (48%) say the Court should not change its 1973 decision, while 3-in-10 say the Court should amend its decision, and allow abortions only under certain circumstances. Fewer state residents feel that the decision should be left up to individual states to decide (12%), or that the Court should ban all abortions (9%).

Nancy Whelchel, a research associate at the Poll commented, "New Jerseyans' opinions on abortion mirror those found in national surveys. Although anti-abortion activists receive a lot of media attention, the reality of the situation is that the majority of people support a woman's right to abortion. Furthermore, this support tends to be consistent across most segments of the population."

If the Supreme Court overturns its decision on abortion and leaves it up to individual states to decide, a solid majority of residents (56%) are "strongly opposed" to any new legislation in New Jersey restricting a woman's right to an abortion. An additional 12 percent are "mildly opposed" to such legislation. Less than 1-in-5 would "strongly favor" laws in New Jersey restricting abortion, and 7 percent would "mildly favor" the restrictions.

Today the National Organization for Women is holding a "March for Women's Equality and Women's Lives" in Washington, D.C. According to its organizers, a primary goal of the march is to "keep abortion legal." The survey indicates that most New Jerseyans are sympathetic to this goal, with 51 percent saying they "strongly favor" the Roe vs. Wade decision making abortion legal, while 18 percent "mildly favor" the ruling. Twenty-two percent are "strongly opposed" to the 1973 ruling on abortion, with another 3 percent "mildly opposed."

Fifty percent of New Jerseyans say they "strongly oppose" a constitutional amendment that would ban abortions except when the mother's life was in danger, with another 9 percent "mildly opposed." Twenty-five percent "strongly favor" and 10 percent "mildly favor" such an amendment.

Slightly less than half of New Jerseyans (44%) say they know someone who has had an abortion, while 53 percent say they do not. Of those saying they know a person who has had an abortion, almost three-fourths say that person was someone close to them.

More than half (53%) of the states residents think that money from government supported health programs should be used to help pay for abortions for qualified people, while 43 percent are against such a practice.

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## BACKGROUND MEMO -- RELEASE SL/EP 23-4 (EP 73-4), SUNDAY, APRIL 9, 1989

The latest *Star-Ledger/Eagleton* Poll was conducted between March 6 and 15, 1989, when a random sample of New Jerseyans, (18 years and older) was interviewed by telephone. Figures presented for the total sample of 800 have a sampling error of  $\pm 3.5$  percent at a 95 percent confidence interval. Sampling error is the probable difference in results between interviewing everyone in a population versus a scientific sample taken from that population. Sampling error does not take into account other possible sources of error inherent in any study of public opinion. The questions and figures referred to in this release are as follows:

"Do you agree or disagree with the following statement: The decision to have an abortion is a private matter that should be left to the woman to decide without government intervention."

	<u>Agree</u>	<u>Disagree</u>	<u>Depends</u>	<u>Don't Know</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
TOTAL	80%	18%	2%	1%	101%	(800)
<u>Ideology</u>						
--liberal	85	15	0	0	100	(153)
--moderate	85	13	2	1	101	(409)
--conservative	68	30	1	1	100	(176)

"In 1973, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that a woman may go to a doctor to have an abortion during the first three months of pregnancy. Do you favor or oppose this ruling? (IF "FAVOR" OR "OPPOSE," PROBE: Do you strongly or mildly (favor/oppose) this?)"

	<u>Strongly Favor</u>	<u>Mildly Favor</u>	<u>Mildly Oppose</u>	<u>Strongly Oppose</u>	<u>Depends</u>	<u>Don't Know</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
TOTAL	51%	18%	3%	22%	3%	3%	100%	(799)
<u>Ideology</u>								
--liberal	62	15	3	18	2	0	100	(153)
--moderate	55	20	4	15	1	4	99	(408)
--conservative	34	17	4	39	5	2	101	(176)
<u>Age</u>								
--18 - 29	64	8	4	21	2	1	100	(155)
--30 - 49	50	19	4	21	3	3	100	(358)
--50 & over	44	25	2	21	4	4	100	(270)
<u>Education</u>								
--less than high school	42	20	1	31	1	6	101	(87)
--high school graduate	49	20	3	21	4	3	100	(249)
--more than high school	60	15	5	16	3	1	100	(463)

"This year the U.S. Supreme court will be deciding on a case which may change their 1973 ruling on abortion. How much have you heard or read about the Supreme Court's review of this case--a lot, some, a little or nothing at all?"

	<u>A Lot</u>	<u>Some</u>	<u>A Little</u>	<u>Nothing At All</u>	<u>Don't Know</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
TOTAL	18%	31%	25%	24%	1%	99%	(800)

"Are you very concerned, somewhat concerned or not at all concerned with the outcome of the Supreme Court's decision this year on abortion?"

	<u>Very Concerned</u>	<u>Somewhat Concerned</u>	<u>Not At All Concerned</u>	<u>Don't Know</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
TOTAL	43%	41%	14%	2%	100%	(798)
<u>Ideology</u>						
--liberal	58	26	13	3	100	(153)
--moderate	40	43	15	2	100	(408)
--conservative	38	48	14	1	101	(176)
<u>Income</u>						
--under \$20,000	37	39	21	3	100	(148)
--\$20,000 - \$30,000	47	34	18	1	100	(104)
--\$30,001 - \$50,000	41	47	11	1	100	(234)
--over \$50,000	49	45	6	0	100	(227)
<u>Knows Someone Who Had an Abortion</u>						
--yes--close to person	58	36	6	1	101	(279)
--yes--not close to person	32	55	12	1	100	(111)
--no--doesn't know anyone	36	42	20	3	101	(408)

"In general, which of the following four views comes closest to your own? The Supreme Court... (READ EACH ITEM)"

	<u>Should Ban All Abortions</u>	<u>Should Allow Abortions Only Under Certain Circumstances</u>	<u>Leave it up to Individual States to Decide on the Legality of Abortion</u>	<u>Should Not Change its 1973 Decision Legalizing Abortion</u>	<u>Don't Know</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
TOTAL	9%	29%	12%	48%	2%	100%	(798)
<i><u>Ideology</u></i>							
--liberal	7	23	6	62	2	100	(153)
--moderate	7	28	12	51	2	100	(408)
--conservative	14	38	13	35	1	101	(176)
<i><u>Education</u></i>							
--less than high school	19	31	10	38	2	100	(87)
--high school graduate	6	29	15	47	3	100	(249)
--more than high school	5	27	9	57	1	99	(463)
<i><u>Religion</u></i>							
--protestant	11	34	12	42	2	101	(388)
--catholic	8	26	13	49	4	100	(219)
--other	7	19	11	62	0	99	(155)
<i><u>Knows Someone Who Had an Abortion</u></i>							
--yes--close to person	6	17	11	64	2	100	(279)
--yes--not close to person	9	31	13	46	0	99	(111)
--no--doesn't know anyone	11	35	12	40	3	101	(409)

"If the Supreme Court overturns its decision on abortion, and leaves it up to individual states to decide, would you favor or oppose new laws in New Jersey to restrict a woman's right to have an abortion? (IF FAVOR OR OPPOSE, PROBE: Would you strongly (favor/oppose) or not?)"

	<u>Strongly Favor</u>	<u>Favor Not Strongly</u>	<u>Oppose Not Strongly</u>	<u>Strongly Oppose</u>	<u>Depends</u>	<u>Don't Know</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
TOTAL	16%	7%	12%	56%	4%	5%	100%	(799)
<i><u>Party</u></i>								
--democratic	14	5	12	60	3	6	100	(263)
--independent	16	5	10	59	5	5	100	(271)
--republican	18	12	15	48	4	3	100	(238)
<i><u>Ideology</u></i>								
--liberal	12	3	12	69	1	3	100	(153)
--moderate	11	10	11	59	3	6	100	(408)
--conservative	29	5	14	42	7	3	100	(176)

"Would you favor or oppose a constitutional amendment that would make abortions illegal unless the mother's life was in danger? (PROBE: Are you strongly (in favor of/opposed to) such an amendment or only mildly (in favor of/opposed to) it?)"

	<u>Strongly Favor</u>	<u>Mildly Favor</u>	<u>Mildly Oppose</u>	<u>Strongly Oppose</u>	<u>Don't Know</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
TOTAL	25%	10%	9%	50%	5%	99%	(799)
<u>Ideology</u>							
--liberal	23	4	9	62	2	100	(153)
--moderate	20	13	12	50	5	100	(408)
--conservative	40	8	7	40	5	100	(176)
<u>Education</u>							
--less than high school	38	15	3	37	7	100	(87)
--high school graduate	25	11	10	48	7	101	(249)
--more than high school	17	6	14	60	3	100	(463)

"Should money from Medicaid, Medicare or other government supported health programs be used to help pay for abortions for those people who qualify?"

	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>Don't Know</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
TOTAL	53%	43%	5%	101%	(799)
<u>Party</u>					
--democratic	56	38	6	100	(263)
--independent	57	38	5	100	(271)
--republican	43	56	1	100	(238)
<u>Ideology</u>					
--liberal	60	34	6	100	(153)
--moderate	56	41	4	101	(408)
--conservative	44	52	4	100	(176)
<u>Gender</u>					
--male	60	37	3	100	(394)
--female	46	48	6	100	(405)

"Do you know someone who has had an abortion?"

	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>Refused</u>	<u>Don't Know</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
TOTAL	44%	53%	2%	1%	100%	(799)
<u>Age</u>						
--18 - 29	63	36	1	0	100	(155)
--30 - 49	56	43	0	1	100	(358)
--50 & over	22	74	2	1	99	(270)
<u>Education</u>						
--less than high school	28	68	3	1	100	(87)
--high school graduate	41	56	2	0	99	(250)
--more than high school	59	40	0	1	100	(462)

"Was that person someone who is close to you?"

	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>Refused</u>	<u>Don't Know</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
TOTAL	72%	26%	1%	1%	100%	(397)

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